SHRI T.R. BAALU: Sir, with due respect to hon. senior lawyer, Shri Nariman, I would like to inform the House that the Forest Commission had been set up under the Chairmanship of former Chief Justice of India, Justice B.N. Kirpal. A seven-member Commission is looking into this. This Commission has got two-year's duration to submit a report to the Government. The terms of reference of this Commission are: (1) Establishment of a meaningful partnership and interface with the local communities for forest management; (2) Find out policy option for sustainable forests and wildlife management and development; (3) Biodiversity conservation and eco security. Everything will come into it. I think the hon. Justice will make a note of this and see to it that a proper advice is given to the Department. We will consider it.

SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA: Sir, while going through the hon. Minister's reply, it can be seen that there has been an increase in forest area in 1999, as compared to 1997. Now, we are in 2003.1 want to know from the hon. Minister whether there has been any increase, or, decrease in the forest area because there have been many encroachments in the forest areas.

SHRI T.R. BAALU: Mr. Chairman, Sir, there has been an increase of 0.27 per cent in the forest area in the year 1999, as compared to 1997. Definitely, there are some reports which indicate that there has been an increase in the forest cover, but it has not been disclosed so far. We are making the last minute corrections, and we will announce it very shortly. At the same time, if there is any diversion of forest land due to developmental activities, definitely, we will see to it that the compensatory afforestation is done. The penal compensation is also imposed. Even for diverting forest land for non-forest purposes, we would cultivate the area twice which has been diverted. Piror to 1980, there was a diversion of 1,25,000 hectares per year, whereas now, it is only 25,000 hectares.

Grant-in-aid for voluntary organisations

*252. DR. A.K. PATEL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether some voluntary organizations in Gujarat are being provided grant-in-aid by the Central Government for protection of environment;

(b) if so, the names of these organizations, indicating the year from

which they are being provided grant-in-aid along with break up of last three years, year-wise;

(c) whether the Government monitor the works executed by them with the funds provided to them under such grant-in-aid; and

(d) if so, the details of the monitoring process?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) Details of grants in aid released directly by Government of India for protection of environment to voluntary agencies in Gujarat, and the monitoring mechanism therefor are given in the table below:

SI N	Voluntary Organization	Funds released (Rs. In lakhs)			Monitoring Mechanism
		2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	
	Under Small Grants Programme of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)				Centre for Environment Education (CEF) has been appointed the National Host Institution
1	Viksat, Ahmedabad	—	4.00	4.00	(NHI) for implementation
2	Sardar Patel Renewable Energy Research Institute, Vallabh Vidyanagar		—	4.50	of the Project. The NHI undertakes field visits. Further, Regional Committees have been
3	Gujarat Ecological Society, Vadodara	—	—	4.41	set up to evaluate progress. Finally, the
4	Naroda Industries Association, Naroda	—	—	6.00	progress is reviewed by a National Steering
5	JATAN Vinobha Ashram, Vadodara	—	—	4.90	Committee headed by a Joint Secretary of
6	Vikas Centre for Development, Ahmedabad		—	6.00	Government of India.

DR. A.K. PATEL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, as per the reply of the hon. Minister, there are only six NGOs which are working on this side. Sir, you know it very well that Gujarat is a State where a number of NGOs are doing very well in public work, for protection of environment. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he will give a chance to more NGOs for this purpose.

SHRI T.R. BAALU: Sir, we have financed six NGOs. I will submit the list.

DR. A.K. PATEL: I have got the list. I wanted to know whether you will give more chance to other NGOs.

SHRI T.R. BAALU: Yes; if any proposal comes from the State of Gujarat, we will consider it.

DR. A.K. PATEL: What are the functions and duties given to these NGOs?

SHRI T.R. BAALU: Funds have been released to Viksat, Ahmedabad; Sardar Patel Renewable Energy Research Institute, Vallabh Vidyanagar; Gujarat Ecological Society, Vadodara; Naroda Industries Association, Naroda; Jatan Vinobha Ashram; and Vikas Centre for Development, Ahmedabad. All these institutions have been helped. In the global scenario, they have to work on water conservation, recharging, eco-development projects; as far as climate change is concerned, they have to find the phenomenon that affects the society. All these things would be considered. These are the minimum things. These have to cope up with the global scenario.

SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: With regard to monitoring, I would like to know whether the National Steering Committee, headed by Joint Secretary has ever made any review of the schemes at any point of time, and whether the money allotted is properly utilised by the NGOs.

SHRI T.R. BAALU: We do get proposals from NGOs. Then the Regional Committee processes them. Finally, a committee headed by Joint Secretary in my Ministry processes and finalises it.

SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Is he reviewing them?

SHRI T.Rv BAALU: Periodically we review. Officers are being called over here and we go there.